

Service Area Strategic Plan

Department of Social Services (765)

Service Area 27 of 33

Emergency and Energy Assistance (765 491 03)**Description**

The Emergency and Energy Assistance program service area is a core component of the Commonwealth's safety net for low-income and at-risk Virginians. This service area is responsible for the operation of the Energy Assistance Program (EAP). The Energy Assistance program helps low-income individuals and families meet their immediate and often emergent home energy needs. The program is 100 percent funded from the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant and serves less than half the total number of eligible households in Virginia. Among those households served, the benefit amount typically covers 25 percent of the household's energy costs for that season. With fixed resources, the greater the number of households served, the lower the percentage of overall energy costs the program can cover. The EAP consists of four components: Fuel Assistance, Crisis Assistance, Cooling Assistance and Weatherization Assistance. Fuel Assistance provides benefits to aid households in paying the cost of heating their homes. Crisis Assistance helps households address energy-related emergencies. Cooling Assistance supports households in purchasing or repairing cooling equipment and the payment of electric bills during the summer months. Local departments of social services perform the eligibility determination for the EAP and payments are made directly to vendors in most cases.

The Weatherization Assistance Program provides weatherization services to low-income families and is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through contracts with community-based organizations. By state statute, DHCD receives 15 percent of the LIHEAP block grant to implement this program.

Background Information**Mission Alignment and Authority**

- *Describe how this service supports the agency mission*

These programs assist Virginians in triumphing over poverty and shaping strong futures for themselves, their families and their communities. The programs target low-income individuals and those significantly affected by disasters, assisting each in meeting their basic human needs and rebuilding their lives. This assistance often helps avoid the unfortunate trade-off many low-income families make between housing, food and medicine.

- *Describe the Statutory Authority of this Service*

The Virginia Energy Assistance Program was established in accordance with the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Act (LIHEAP) of 1981 (Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Public Law 97-35, as amended), the Code of Virginia 63.2 and 63.2-805 and Chapter 680 and Chapter 685 of the Administrative Code of Virginia.

Customers

Agency Customer Group	Customer	Customers served annually	Potential annual customers
Individuals, Children and Families (served unknown; potential unlimited)	Low-income Individuals and Families (households)	150,000	254,000

Anticipated Changes To Agency Customer Base

From 2000 to 2006 (most recent Census data), the number of Virginians living in poverty increased to 760,000. With an increasing number of individuals and families living in poverty in Virginia and the dramatic increases in home energy costs being felt among all Virginians, the Department predicts an increase in the total number of households served. This increase in the customer base will lead to a decrease in the benefit amount because of fixed resources.

Partners

Partner	Description
Community Action Agencies	
Federal Emergency Management Agency	
Local Departments of Social Services	
State Agencies	
Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA)	

Products and Services

- *Factors Impacting the Products and/or Services:*

Increases in fuel costs and in the number of individuals living in poverty make the service more expensive while increasing the customer base. This experience has played out over the last three years with steadily increasing caseloads in the EAP as well as other benefit programs targeting low-income individuals and families. The increased customer base results in more work for local departments of social services which receive a fixed allocation (by state regulation) for eligibility determination services. Additionally, federal funding levels are tenuous given the competing demands for limited resources.

- *Anticipated Changes to the Products and/or Services*

Continued increases in energy costs will impact this service area.

- *Listing of Products and/or Services*

- Support of organizations serving communities
- Economic Assistance to low-income families/individuals or nutrition, child care, health care eligibility, and financial assistance to low-income families/individuals
- Services that promote sufficiency

Finance

- Financial Overview

The predominant source of funding for the Energy Assistance Program is the federal LIHEAP block grant. The Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families awards the LIHEAP block grant annually to States and Indian tribes. The Energy Assistance program is 100% federally funded. Funds for the LIHEAP grant are disbursed as follows: fifteen percent is allocated for the Weatherization Assistance Program, ten percent is allocated for State and Local program administration with the remaining funds used to provide direct services and benefits to eligible low income households.

- Financial Breakdown

	Fiscal Year 2009		Fiscal Year 2010	
	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund
Base Budget	\$0	\$35,500,000	\$0	\$35,500,000
Change To Base	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Service Area Total	\$0	\$35,500,000	\$0	\$35,500,000

Service Area Objectives

- Provide access to the Energy Assistance Program.

Objective Measures

- Number of households receiving services through the Energy Assistance Program

Governor's Key:

No

Measure Type:

Output

Measure Frequency:

Annual

Frequency Comment: Number of households receiving services through the Energy Assistance Program

Measure Baseline: 167,765 households were served through one or more of the three components of the Energy Assistance Program in SFY 2007.

Measure Target: 167,765 households will receive services through the Energy Assistance Program by the end of SFY 2010.

Data Source and Calculation: Source – The Energy Assistance System (eligibility system). Calculation – The total number receiving Energy Assistance. Fuel, Crisis and Cooling Assistance not in on-going programs but rather programs with specific annual application periods and specific start-and-end dates.